

## **Amendments to the Claims**

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

### **Listing of Claims**

Claim 1. (Previously Presented) A surgical needle which comprises:

a base portion having a root diameter; and

a tapered end portion extending from said base portion to a pointed end, the tapered end portion defining at least a first and second region, wherein the first region having an average taper ratio of approximately 2.76:1 and the second region having an average taper ratio of approximately 5.65:1.

Claim 2. (Previously Presented) The surgical needle according to claim 1

wherein the first region incorporates a length which is approximately 1/5 of the overall length of the tapered end portion.

Claim 3. (New) A surgical needle, which comprises:

an elongated needle member including a base portion having a root diameter and a needle end portion extending to a needle tip, the needle end portion defining a non-linear tapered configuration and being devoid of edges, the needle end portion defining a first region adjacent the needle tip and a second region adjacent the first region, the first region having an average taper ratio less than about 11:1, the second region having an average taper ratio less than about 12:1.

Claim 4. (New) The surgical needle according to claim 3 wherein the first region has an average taper ratio less than about 6:1.

Claim 5. (New) The surgical needle according to claim 4 wherein the second region has an average taper ratio less than about 8:1.

Claim 6. (New) The surgical needle according to claim 5 wherein the first region has an average taper ratio of less than about 3:1.

Claim 7. (New) The surgical needle according to claim 6 wherein the second region has an average taper ratio of less than about 6:1.

Claim 8. (New) The surgical needle according to claim 3 wherein the first region incorporates a length which is at least about 1/5 of the overall length of the tapered end portion.

Claim 9. (New) The surgical needle according to claim 3 wherein the needle end portion defines a general parabolic configuration.

Claim 10. (New) A surgical needle, which comprises:  
an elongated needle member including a base portion and a needle end portion extending to a needle tip, the needle end portion being devoid of an edge and defining a first region adjacent the needle tip and a second region adjacent the first region, the first region

having an average taper ratio of less than about 3:1 and the second region having an average taper ratio of less than about 6:1.

Claim 11. (New) The surgical needle according to claim 10 wherein the needle end portion defines a non-linear tapered configuration.

Claim 12. (New) The surgical needle according to claim 10 wherein the needle tip is pointed.